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FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS STAFF

PROGRAM CBS Evening News STATION WUSA-TV CBS Network

DATE November 21, 1986 7:00 P.M. CITY Washington, D.C.

SUBJECT Aftermath of Iran Negotiations/Director Casey Testifies

DAN RATHER: President Reagan's aides today began trying to convince Congress that secretly sending missiles to Iran was a good idea. Some of what they said conflicted with what Mr. Reagan has told the public.

One of Ayatollah Khomeini's main mullahs boasted today that the deal was his biggest victory in the world's political arena.

Our coverage begins with Phil Jones on Capitol Hill.

PHIL JONES: CIA Director led the shuttle from one side of the Capitol to the other today, trying to salvage the Reagan Administration's credibility. But it didn't appear to work.

SENATOR DANIEL PATRICK MOYNIHAN: May I say about this morning, I can't believe what I heard, and I don't.

JONES: From one of those briefed today came the further disclosure contradicting the President's claim that the U.S. and Israel were the only countries associated with arms shipments.

REP. JIM WRIGHT: We have learned about people who are citizens of other countries and residents of other countries who have been involved in shipments, with the condoning of the United States.

JONES: But the congressional outrage continued over the question of whether the Administration had broken the law by not notifying Congress.

REPORTER: Have you broken the law?

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DIRECTOR WILLIAM CASEY: No, no.

P SENATOR DAVID DURENBERGER: Whether they broke the law or not, they intended not to inform the American people, they intended not to inform the Congress of the United States about something that they knew would become public knowledge.

P JONES: Senators Durenberger and Leahy, head of the Intelligence Committee, fired off a letter to the President this afternoon referring to the meeting between American and Iranian officials, saying, "The committee cannot accept a logic in which such a high-risk meeting is accepted, while there was comparatively minor risks by informing Congress."

Attorney General Meese was identified today as the one who had told the President he could legally avoid notifying Congress. But CBS News was told that this was an opinion that Meese did not put in formal writing.

Senate Democratic leader Byrd announced plans to tighten the law. And ridicule of the mission itself intensified.

SENATOR ROBERT BYRD: That there is a need for Congress to broaden the law to cover all covert operations that are carried out.

P SENATOR SAM NUNN: I think that it was ill-conceived and ineptly implemented.

JONES: The message from here tonight is loud and clear. Members will demand to hear more than they did today, and Congress is ready to tie Ronald Reagan's hands, if necessary, to make sure it doesn't happen again.

TERENCE SMITH: Turning his back on reporters' questions, President Reagan left for Camp David amidst public backbiting among his aides and calls for a shakeup of the White House staff.

Earlier, Senate leaders emerged from a meeting with the President expressing concern over the impact of the bickering.

SENATOR BYRD: This situation is really creating a creeping paralysis that is going to continue to sap the energies and the time of the Administration.

SENATOR ROBERT DOLE: The longer we stay on this, it could hurt the President's credibility.

SMITH: Most of the shakeup speculation centers on National Security Adviser John Poindexter, who orchestrated the

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overture to Iran. Secretary of State Shultz has been privately critical of Poindexter, but today he denied a published report that he had urged the President to fire him.

Adding to the appearance of disarray, another architect of the plan, Robert "Bud" McFarlane, now calls the arms shipments a mistake.

Chief of Staff Don Regan, himself a target of criticism, is said to be infuriated at McFarlane's public statements, reportedly telling a White House meeting, "It was Bud's idea. When you give lousy advice you get lousy results."

And McFarlane is also at odds with Secretary Shultz, who says he had only fragmentary information about the Iran operation.

ROBERT MCFARLANE: It was not kept from the Secretary of State, for I told him repeatedly and often of every item that went on in this enterprise.

SMITH: A former Secretary of State warned that the discord needs to end.

ALEXANDER HAIG: I would be very concerned that in the weeks and months ahead that we not cripple the institution of the presidency.

SMITH: The President's men admit that all this public infighting makes a messy sight. They're anxious to get it behind them, and they're already casting about for another issue, a domestic initiative, a renewed push on arms control, anything that will distract attention from Iran.

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